

ACTION RESEARCH

THE INTERSECTION OF MULTIMODALITY AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE: MULTIMODALITY AS SUBVERSION

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This study explores the relevance of multimodality to critical media literacy. It is based on the understanding that communication is intrinsically multimodal and multimodal communication is inherently social and ideological. By analysing two English-language learners' multimodal ensembles, the study reports on how multimodality contributes to a critical perspective when engaging with media texts, and on the ways in which learners orchestrate multiple semiotic resources to demonstrate their analysis of the politics of representation and the resulting consequences. The findings reveal that, on the one hand, the students were able to identify the power relations between characters as well as how particular characters are marginalized in the media texts they viewed by paying attention to the multiple modes that make up the text's representation. On the other hand, the students were able to articulate the ideological subtexts they identified through the orchestration of various modes rather than relying on the linguistic mode, making their message as persuasive and effective as those in the media texts viewed.

Language(s) Learned in Current Study: English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Keywords: Multimodal texts, Critical media literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Multimodality involves the orchestration of more than one mode of communication among the linguistic, visual, spatial, aural, and gestural modes (Arola, Sheppard, & Ball, 2014) to achieve purposes of meaning making. Even though human communication has never been monomodal, the development of information and communication technologies has resulted in new media that require the ability to navigate a wide repertoire of semiotic resources. Increasingly, as Kress (2003) observes, multimodality “is made easy, usual, ‘natural’ by these technologies” (p. 5).

Despite the widely held belief that today's youths are adroit at navigating all aspects of new technologies, it has been found that they “often lack the abilities to be able to critically assess the media” (Hammer, 2011, p. 360). Indeed, it is the ideologies present in mass media, made powerful and effective through the subtle but skillful use of multiple modes, that students are most often unfamiliar with or even unaware of, that require the most attention in education. Machin and Mayr (2012) similarly contend that not only should we attend to how semiotic resources are adopted and adapted, but “crucially, we must think about these choices in terms of power relations. How do the choices we find serve the interests of authorities, ruling groups, institutions or even individuals in face-to-face situations?” (p. 29).

Research Background

In my own work as a critical English-language educator in Taiwan, it has been challenging to implement

a critical perspective towards media texts that questions rather than confirms their dominant ideologies of race, class, gender, and sexuality. In addition, I constantly encounter students' works that suggest a lack of understanding of the power of multimodality as communication rather than as technological accessories. Thus, I have often struggled to make relevant for my students the identification of semiotic resources for ideological purposes in media texts as well as the ability to make intentional use of semiotic resources for their own aims.

This paper, therefore, documents a qualitative teacher-inquiry conducted with the aim to address both of the aforementioned challenges that I have faced. By drawing from a critical perspective towards multimodality, I attempted to help my students reconsider the ideological and communicative potential of multiple semiotic resources both in relation to the media texts they view and in terms of the texts they compose.

Purpose of Study

The study focuses on the politics of representation in media texts and explores the relevance of multimodality to reading and writing from a critical perspective. The study is based on the understanding that communication is intrinsically multimodal and multimodal communication is inherently social and ideological (Djonov & Zhao, 2013). The paper addresses the following questions: 1) How do language learners negotiate the multiple modes of expression for purposes of critical media literacy in their multimodal ensembles? 2) How does multimodality contribute to a critical perspective when engaging with media texts?

Critical Media Literacy

The study is informed by critical media literacy (CML) in its focus on the politics of representation in media texts. Kellner and Share (2009) propose a critical perspective towards media literacy that "focuses on ideology critique and analyzing the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality" with the aim to exploring "how power, media, and information are linked" (p. 8). They further argue that CML "helps people to discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, to investigate media effects and uses, to use media intelligently, and to construct alternative media" (p. 4). Thus, the CML perspective is not only concerned with identifying how the media delineate people of different race, class, gender, and sexuality, and the consequences of such depiction, but more importantly, it emphasizes the production of counternarratives, such as making one's own videos that speak back to the "othering" that is often present in the media (Gainer, 2010), as that which illuminates how what appears to be innocent and neutral is very often the result of intentional framing and filtering, which plays a large part in media manipulation (Goodman, 2003).

Multimodality and Social Semiotics

Kress (2008) explains of the relationship between multimodality and social semiotics:

Multimodality indicates what is to be attended to.... social semiotics provides the theoretical, descriptive and analytical tools for....focusing on the specificity of the differing potentials of modes for making meaning, describing and analyzing the interrelations among the modes...what meaning each brings and deals with, and describing the meanings formed in their interrelations. (p. 92)

Thus, the notion of design (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Kress, 2000) is also pertinent, as it focuses on the agency of both the text maker as well as the text user. On the one hand, it recognizes how the purposes of the designers intersect with their understanding of the affordances of modes at their disposal in navigating the semiotic resources for particular sets of audiences. For the reader, familiarity with the affordances of modes and their conventional and unconventional uses "allows them to form their hypotheses about the

purposes which may have given rise to this use of the resources” (Kress, 2003, p. 50).

The goals of critical media literacy are therefore supported by a social semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) in seeking to understand how media texts, such as films, are constructed and can be analyzed. On the one hand, such an approach allows the focus not only on the words and behaviors that characters in movies say and do (i.e. linguistic and gestural modes), but also how the words and the behaviors are undergird by sound and music (i.e. aural mode) and the composition of what is seen on the screen, including special effects, camera lens, and so forth (i.e. visual and spatial modes). On the other hand, a multimodal social semiotic lens enables the examination of how students make use of the multiple modes to demonstrate their critical analysis of the politics of representation. Thus, critical media literacy, multimodality, and social semiotics serve a “partnership in research” (Kress, 2011) for the purposes of this study.

Literature Review

Increasingly in recent years, studies have been conducted that focus on English-language learners’ (ELLs) multimodal composition process and product, most often of an autobiographical nature (e.g. McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Salianni, 2007; Lee, 2014; Nelson, 2006, 2008; Yang, 2012). Indeed, even when not concerning ELLs, studies of multimodality often examine how the author constructs and/or deconstructs his/her identities through multiple semiotic resources, such as in the case of Hull and Nelson’s (2005) seminal work.

Shin and Cimasko’s (2008) study represents a departure. Focusing on academic essays, they found a dominance of the linguistic mode in the students’ understanding and composition of the multimodal argumentative essay, even though non-linguistic resources were employed in order to reflect author identities and emotions. In Tardy’s (2005) study of four ELLs’ academic PowerPoint presentation slides, she found that the students did not hesitate to seek the assistance of the visual mode for academic and professional purposes. The present study continues to focus on how multimodality is used by ELLs to construct texts of an academic nature, in this case, a critique of the politics of representations of race, class, and gender in movies.

METHODOLOGY

In order to address both of the aforementioned challenges that I have faced as a tertiary EFL educator, a qualitative teacher-inquiry was conducted in a freshman English course I taught at a university in northern Taiwan. Classes met weekly for two consecutive hours over an 18-week semester. There were 26 students enrolled in the course, including 8 males. These students have had at least 9 years of EFL education, and were placed in this highest of the four level classes based on a proficiency test administered by the university at the beginning of their freshman year. Having been designated in this advanced level course also meant that the students were not eligible to waive freshman English, which required proof of a TOEFL score of 250 on the CBT or 100-117 on the iBT or a score of 7 on IELTS, or equivalent scores on other proficiency tests. Multiple types of data were collected as part of the course implementation, although the students’ multimodal reports are the focus of this study.

Course Implementation

Over the first half of the semester, the class watched three movies, *Romeo Must Die* (Silver, Van Wyck, & Bartkowiak, 2000), *Maid in Manhattan* (Goldsmith-Thomas, Schiff, & Schindler, 2002), and *The Help* (Columbus, Marnathan, & Green, 2011), through which we examined portrayals of stereotypes in relation to race, class, and gender as well as how discriminatory portrayals are achieved not only through plotlines and dialogues but also through images, sounds, gestures, and their spatial organization. I also discussed with the students basic film concepts using examples from Golden (2001) and van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001), but took care to point out that the purpose was not film study but rather, to better identify how

films bring viewers into particular relations of power. As Kist (2008) proposes, film appreciation is conducive to “a criticism of existing power dynamics, whether it be a study of the way a film positions the viewer in terms of gender, race, or any number of categories” (p. 523).

I chose to focus on movies because they represent a popular type of mass media wherein “discourses are communicated through different kinds of semiotic resources, different modes” and “many people most frequently experience these discourses as fun, as style, and simply as part of the taken for granted everyday world, even if on other more or less tangible levels they feel their power over them” (Machin, 2013, p. 347). The genre of movies was also selected as the form of media text to be analyzed because movies have been “proven effective in teaching students about myriad topics” (Baines, 2008, p. 506). ([Appendix A](#) explains the choice of the three movies as well as the list of questions discussed.) After the viewing and discussion, the students wrote an analysis paper to demonstrate their understanding of the politics of representation in terms of race, class, and gender and also the multiple semiotic resources available to moving-image story-telling.

In the second half of the semester, the students worked on their multimodal report, as a form of counternarrative emphasized in the CML framework that speak back to dominant discourses and ideologies on race, class, and gender that are often present in mass media texts. I first explained the five modes focusing on ways the modes might be navigated into “a process of braiding or orchestration” (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 225) by showing multimodal compositions given as examples in Miller and McVee (2012). The class discussed how these multimodal ensembles worked well and also how they might be further improved. Then, the students were instructed to analyze a movie of choice from the perspective of race, class, gender, and/or sexuality and present the results using the five modes in a conscientious manner. Their final work was required to have an auto-run function, as they had to show their work in class without the benefit of an oral presentation, because I wanted the multimodal ensembles to be self-contained rather than being dependent on additional live presentations/explanations. The students were allowed to work individually, in pairs, or in groups of threes. Ten students worked individually while there were two pairs and four groups of three. At the end of the semester, the students reflected individually on their experiences in a reflection paper (see [Appendix B](#) for prompts). I further followed-up on the reflection by conducting open-ended focus group interviews of the students, which were digitally recorded and transcribed immediately afterwards.

Data Analysis

As Hull and Nelson (2005) remind, there is “no one formula for transcribing multimodal texts; the timescale (if there is any at all), segmentation scheme, and so on, must be created in direct relation and response to the modes and questions with which one is concerned” (p. 236). In attempting to understand my students’ orchestration of the multiple semiotic resources, I drew from the concept of design as set forth by Kress (2010), that a multimodal ensemble is “prospective” and “transformative,” and “hence is inevitably innovative,” rather than “being a competent implementation of conventionally given practices” (p. 132). More specifically, Flewitt, Hampel, Hauck, and Lancaster’s (2009) notion of using “visual frames as units” (p. 46) was helpful in my analysis of the students’ multimodal ensembles.



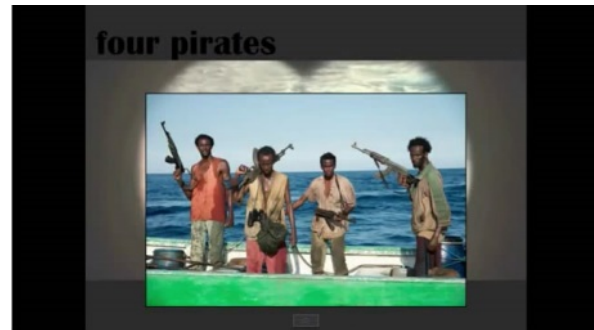
Slide 2



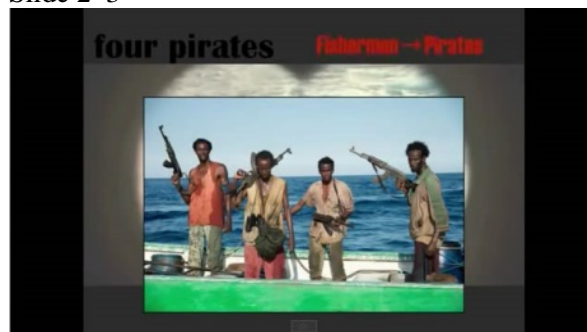
Slide 2-2



Slide 2-3



Slide 3



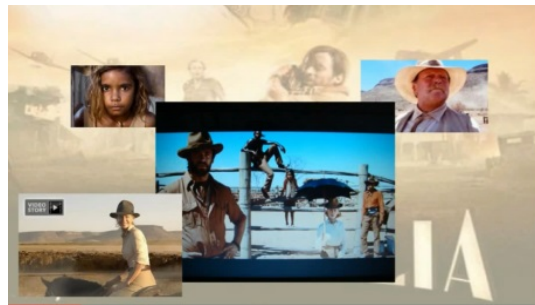
Slide 3-2



Slide 3-3

Figure 1. Example of transcript of slide sets 2 and 3.

I transcribed the ensembles by slide sets because this allowed me to draw attention to the components and composition of each slide set. For example, each new element added to a slide would be viewed as part of that particular slide set, and would be numbered, for example, as slide 2, slide 2-2, slide 2-3 and so on. When all of the elements are replaced, that would be considered the beginning of the next slide set, which would be numbered slide 3, slide 3-2, and so forth (Figure 1). However, if clips of segments of movies were included, that would be transcribed as “clip” with a description of the segment. One multimodal ensemble was accompanied by a student’s narration, which I also transcribed in relation to the slide sets (Figure 2), and the narration was analyzed as an additional linguistic mode. I went through an iterative coding process with each slide set and also made comparisons across slide sets. This process helped to illuminate how the students orchestrated various modes to show their analysis of representations of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the movies.



and Nola
Slide 12



was sent to the Mission Island. What's worse,
Slide 12-2



she had a fight with Drover.
Slide 12-3



In the end, they still find each other and Nola went on a
Slide 13



walkabout with his grandfather, King George.
Slide 13-2

Figure 2. Example of transcript of slide sets 12 and 13 with voice track.

In the following sections, I present the results gleaned from two multimodal ensembles, both made by groups of three students. The [first ensemble](#) analyzed the movie *Australia* (Luhmann, Knapman, Mac Brown, & Luhmann, 2008) and the [second ensemble](#) analyzed the movie *Captain Phillips* (Rudin, Brunetti, DeLuca, & Greengrass, 2013). (The hyperlinked ensembles can be viewed in relation to the discussion in the next sections.)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: AUSTRALIA

Visual/Spatial Modes and Gender Relations

In this multimodal ensemble, because it is accompanied by a voice track of a student's narration, it would at first seem that the linguistic mode is dominant. But that is not the case. The students maneuvered the various modes and demonstrated that not only "the world told is a different world to the world shown," but that "the world shown" highlights what is not said in "the world told" (Kress, 2003, p. 1).

In slide set 22 ([Figure 3](#)), in which the students comment on how the movie often shows women as "powerless and ridiculous," using a picture that has Lady Sarah Ashley (henceforth Sarah) in a vulnerable

posture, seemingly leaning away from something, and also covering her mouth with a handkerchief, as if in an attempt to block out the elements. These words are highlighted by the block arrow pointing towards them as well as by the color red, both visual methods to draw attention. In particular, the word *ridiculous* is further stressed, as it occupies two positions, on the one hand, as part of the linguistic mode, and on the other hand, inside the picture and beside the figure of Sarah.

The ridiculousness of Sarah's portrayal is reiterated a third time in the first of the two clips that follow this slide. The clip is of the scene in which Sarah marvels at kangaroos in an exaggerated manner, then screams and mourns their death when they are shot by aborigines. While Sarah screams, with the camera up close in front of her wide-open mouth, the students added the word "ridiculous" to the clip, placed over her mouth, underscoring their feeling of Sarah's portrayal in this scene.

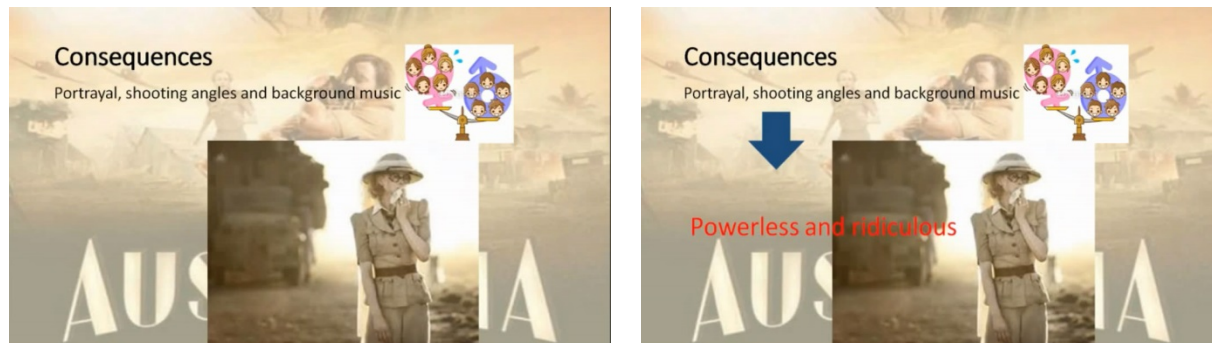


Figure 3. Slide set 22.

In clip 2 that immediately follows, Sarah states to Drover that she is "capable as any men." But the students point out that in a scene in which Sarah asserts her own ability, she is paradoxically shot from a higher camera angle while Drover is shot from a relatively lower camera angle. In their annotation of the clip, the students point out that the camera angle through which the scene is shot places Sarah in a relatively lower position and Drover in a higher position, serving to undermine Sarah's assertion rather than support her, as her looking up at Drover renders her words less potent than they could be.

The students then commented on how "people only see her beauty rather than her ability, even though she claim [sic] that she is capable as any men," in the voice track for slide set 23 (Figure 4). In this sentence in the voice track, people's views of her and Sarah's views of herself are compared. However, through the interaction of the visual and the spatial mode, such as by placing the quote (with the capitalized words in the speech bubble) in slide 23-4 on top of the beauty-versus-ability comparison in slide 23-3, the students were in essence erasing the comparison, suggestive of their agreement with Sarah's own assessment of her ability, as they could have placed the speech bubble in a multitude of other places on this slide. In addition, the attribution of the source of the speech bubble also draws viewers' attention to a picture of Sarah, who not only is presented in a frontal angle, suggesting engagement with the viewers (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001), but is also stepping forward, with her arms open by her side, a posture signifying her confidence and self-assurance, as if daring the viewers to challenge her assertion of her ability, unlike in slide 22, where she is looking away at a 45-degree angle, in a posture of offer and detachment, suggesting passivity (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

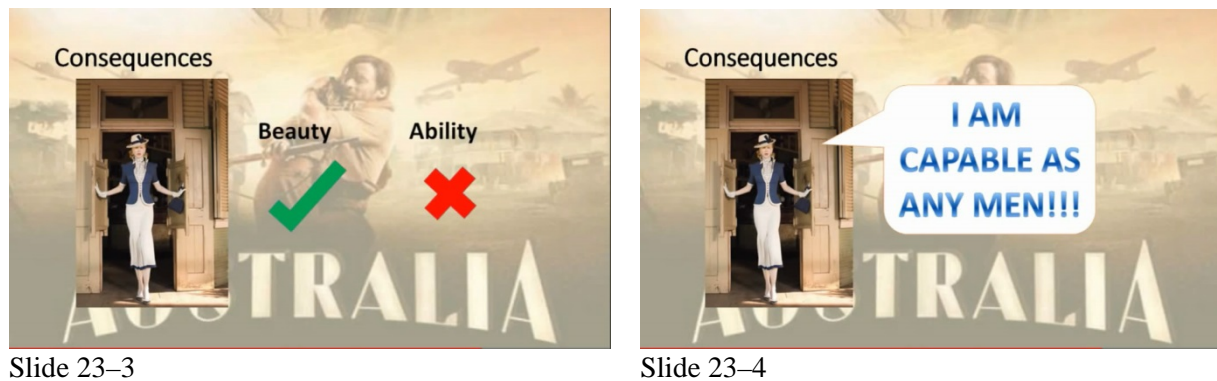


Figure 4. Slide set 23.

Much has been discussed about image-text relations, very often from the point of view of clarifying meaning (e.g. Unsworth & Cleirigh, 2009) or focusing on the expediency of each mode (e.g. Kress, 2010). The example above reveals another relation between the linguistic and the other modes, that what is not said using the linguistic mode can be effectively “said” using other modes, visually and spatially, such as the students’ agreement with Sarah’s assessment of herself.

Modality and Gender Relations

It is important to view this work as a multimodal “ensemble” not only because of how the various “modes interact to construct the integrated meanings” (Unsworth & Cleirigh, 2009, p. 151), but also to understand the integrated meanings across the slides. Together, slide set 22 (Figure 3) and slides 7 (Figure 5) and 12–3 (Figure 6) reveal the students’ views of gender relations.

In slide set 22, the cartoon-picture on the top right corner shows that men, as expressed both through the male symbol and the cartoon faces, are heavier on the scale, showing that they carry more weight than women in this movie. It seems to represent the resulting consequence of the portrayal of women as “powerless and ridiculous” discussed in this slide.

A similar case of using cartoon figures to show gender relations can be found in two other slides. In the slides preceding slide 7 (Figure 5) that introduce the plot and characters, the students narrated that, “Sarah found out that [Fletcher] is a very bad guy who not only stole their cattle but killed her husband. Finding out Mr. Fletcher was a bad guy, Sarah fired him.” Sarah firing Fletcher is expressed first and foremost through the cartoon of her kicking him forcefully, as it occupies the central position of salience (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001) in the slide, complemented by the speech bubble in the top right corner.

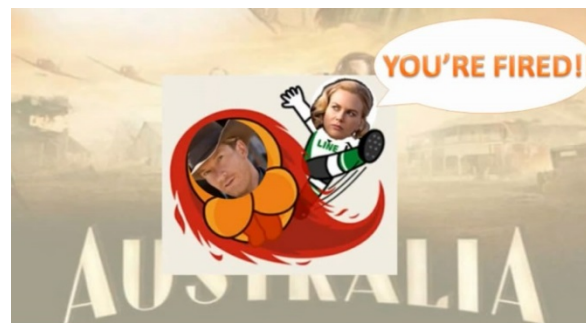


Figure 5. Slide 7.

In slide 12–3 (Figure 6), the students narrated that “and Nola was sent to the Mission Island. What’s worse, she had a fight with Drover.” The couple’s fight is visually represented on the bottom right corner of the slide, also through cartoon figures.



Figure 6. Slide 12-3.

In these three cases, men and women are in situations of conflict or conflicting power relations (with the female having the upper hand in slide 7, the female being outweighed by the male in slide set 22, and then both on equal footing in slide 12–3). All three cases are represented through cartoon rendering. In contrast, in slide 13 (Figure 7), narrated as “in the end, they still find each other,” a photograph, which is “the contemporary standard of high naturalistic modality” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 151) was used to represent a harmonious situation between Sarah and Drover.

Based on the lens of modality, that is, the level of congruence between what something looks like in an image and in real life, cartoons would have lower modality compared to photographs. Using a method that suggests a lower level of reality to present gender conflict may be a way that the students distanced themselves from such situations of tension. The cartoons in slides 7 and 12–3 also add an element of humor to a situation that the students perhaps felt is undesirable, unlike situations of harmony, which can be represented as they are, in the real-life rendering of a photo. Thus, “the world shown” is not only “different” but reveals more than “the world told” (Kress, 2003, p. 1) in the voice track in this ensemble.



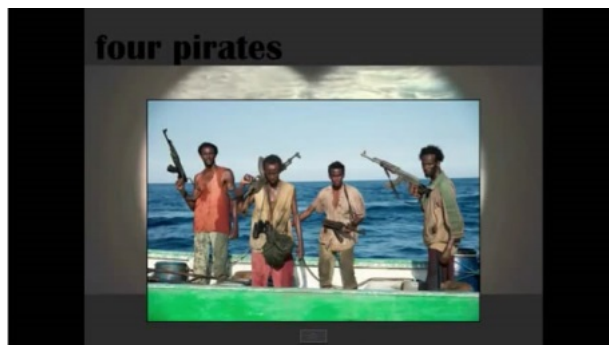
Figure 7. Slide 13.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

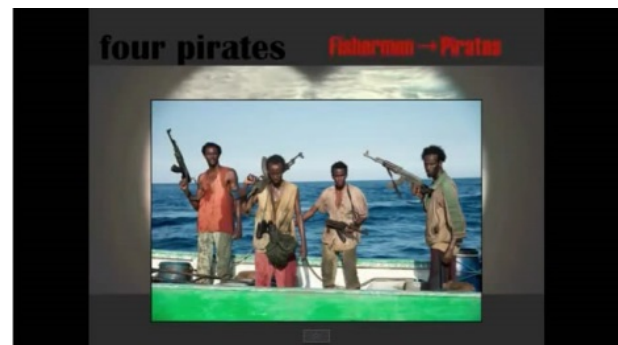
Visual/Spatial Lens and Race/Gender Relations

The second case of multimodal ensemble orchestrates the modes in different ways to express unequal power relations. Slide set 3 (Figure 8) introduces the four pirates through the framing of binoculars. The ingenuity of this approach lies in its revelation that this story is told through the perspective of the person holding the binoculars: Captain Phillips. The students not only identified the point of view of the movie but also strategically used the binoculars in this slide set to show that the Somali pirates’ storyline is

presented from an American perspective.



Slide 3



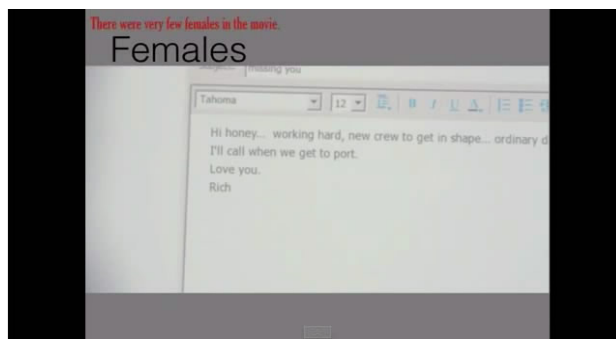
Slide 3-2



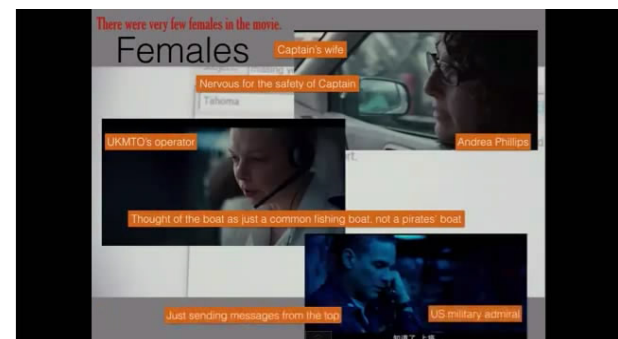
Slide 3-3

Figure 8. Slide set 3.

In slide set 7 (Figure 9), the screenshot of Phillips' email to his wife, Andrea, was used as the background image for the discussion of females in the movie, suggesting female existence as in relation to men; that is, Andrea existed in this movie mainly through Phillips' thoughts and words. In addition, Admiral Howard, a female, did not even receive screen time, despite being in a position of authority. It is the male captain's response to her in their communication through which she is brought to exist in the movie. In slide 7-5, in the bottom right corner, is a photo of the captain in communication with the female admiral, highlighting her non-existence. These two examples demonstrate that "non-linguistic elements are never semiotically innocent" (Flewitt et al., 2009, p. 41), nor ideologically neutral, both in the movie's representation of the pirates and women, as well as in the students' presentation of their analysis.



Slide 7



Slide 7-5

Figure 9. Slide set 7.

Visual/Spatial Layering as Shifting Power Relations

Slide set 10 (Figure 10) analyzes the shift of power relations between Phillips and the pirates using the

spatial mode (i.e. the camera angle) as frame of analysis, from when Phillips looks downward at the pirates failing to catch up with him (slide 10–2), to when they are in negotiations after the pirates first board his ship (slide 10–3), to when they are in the lifeboat, where Phillips is forced to sit and look up at Muse (slide 10–4). The pictures are positioned vertically, with Phillips on the top half of the slide regardless of whether he is looking downward or upward. In discussions of the US and the Somali characters throughout this ensemble, the US characters are consistently placed at the top while the Somali ones are placed at the bottom, suggestive of the overall power relations. In addition, the three sets of juxtaposed pictures appear one after another and on top of another, suggesting the progression of the shift in power relations. Having the pictures layered halfway on top of the previous ones but not completely obscuring the previous ones also shows that these three relations of power co-exist and vary at different points in the movie.

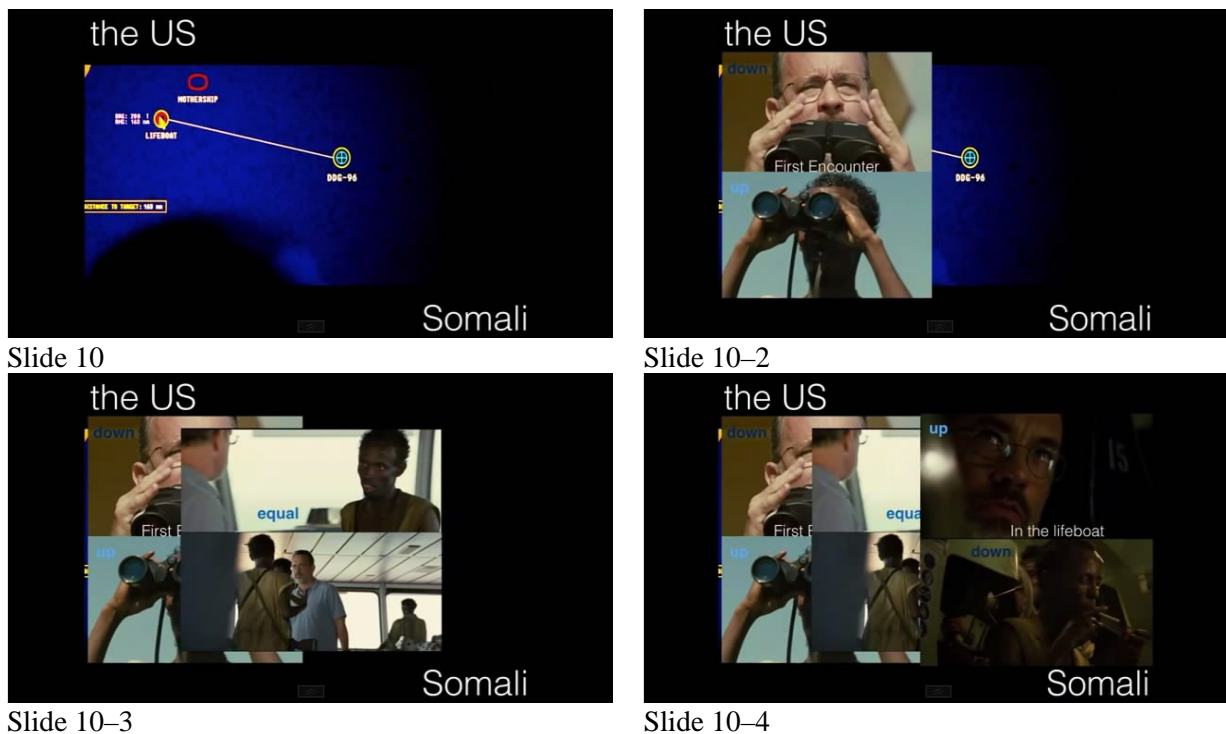


Figure 10. Slide set 10.

A similar strategy with the spatial mode is used, in slide set 18 (Figure 11), when the power relations among the Somali pirates are discussed, particularly between Muse and the leader of the other skiff. In this case though, the second picture, featured in slide 18–3, overrides and mostly obscures the first one, suggesting the previous power relations have ceased to exist. The third picture, featured in slide 18–4, overrides but only partially obscures the second one, suggesting the co-existence of power relations represented in these screenshots. In 18–5, when at last Muse kills the other man, the picture overrides the previous ones, with the man lying flat looking upward at Muse at an almost 90-degree angle. This picture again overrides the others, suggesting that the power relations portrayed are final.



Slide 18-2



Slide 18-3



Slide 18-4



Slide 18-5

Figure 11. Slide set 18.

Modes “differ in their affordances” and “offer different and distinct potential for presenting the world” (Kress, 2010, p. 96), and “can also have an ideological dimension” (Machin, 2013, p. 350). By creatively coordinating the visual mode through the spatial mode, the placement of photos (top vs. down and layering) reveals the students’ analysis of the power relations between the characters in the movie and the students’ representation of these relations as either temporary or perpetual.

The Linguistic Mode of Punctuation as Gender Imbalance

The previously discussed spatial representation is not used in the other slides in this ensemble, in which pictures are usually placed in different corners on a slide rather than overlapping, except in one other case in slide set 23 (Figure 12), but with a twist. In these slides, we first see one white male and a black male (slide 23), then another white male and a black male (slide 23-2), then two more white males (slide 23-3), and finally four white males (slide 23-4), with increasing emphasis in the linguistic commentaries of “male” (slide 23), “male” (slide 23-2), “still...male” (slide 23-3), and “male, AGAIN!!!!!!” (slide 23-4). The spatial mode is used somewhat differently from the previously described two instances as a result of its braiding with the linguistic mode.

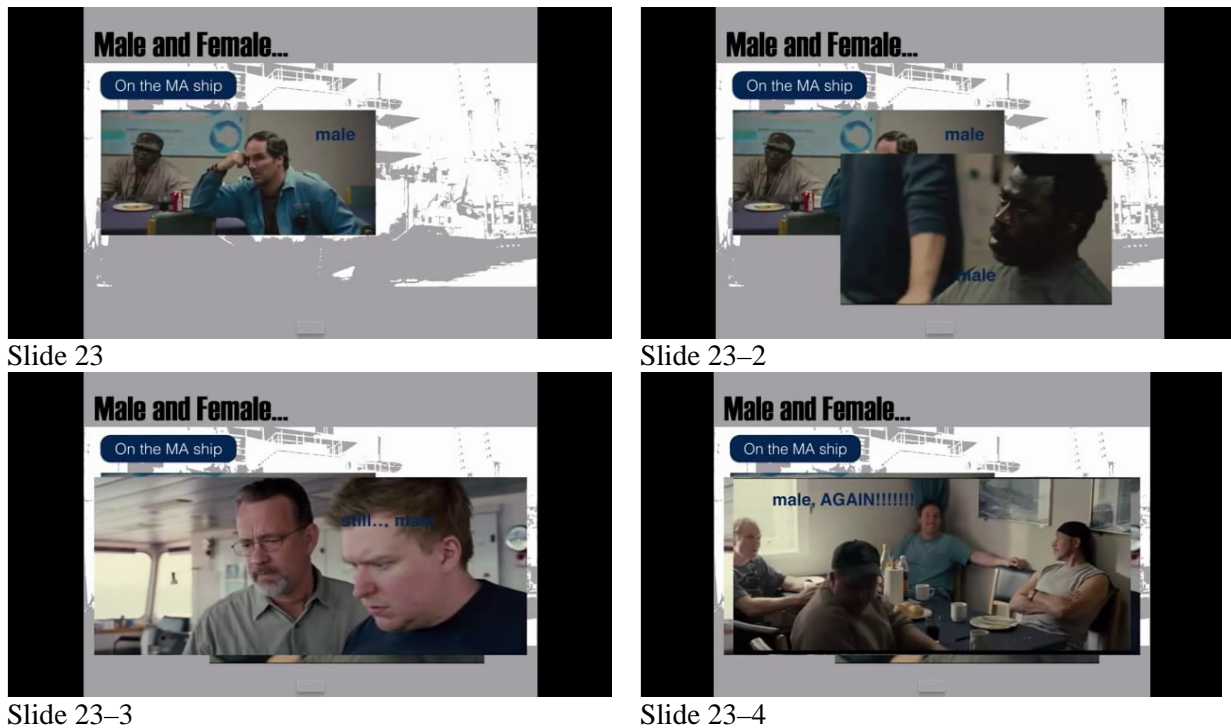


Figure 12. Slide set 23.

In comparing the male and female representations of the crew, the visuals take on less importance than in the previously discussed slide sets, as there are no pictures of female crewmembers available. In this set of slides, a different kind of power relations is discussed, not between existing characters, but between male and non-existent female crewmembers. As a result, the visual and spatial modes of layering (for slide sets 10 and 18) are substituted by the linguistic mode of punctuation (i.e., ellipses, capitalization, exclamation marks) in order to relay a different message. In slides 23–3 and 23–4, the linguistic mode takes precedence over the visual through the use of punctuation, (i.e., with ellipses highlighting the word *still* in 23–3 and the exclamation marks underscoring the word *AGAIN*, which is also capitalized, adding a second form of punctuation to the word), evoking an escalating urgency in the realization that there are only males on the crew, and most of them featured are white. The linguistic mode of punctuation thus takes the place of female crew photos to highlight gender imbalance. Thus, in this case, the world “shown” can be made to serve different purposes when it is also “told,” with appropriate punctuation.

CONCLUSION: BETWEEN WHAT IS SAID AND WHAT IS NOT SAID

Various studies have confirmed the communicative potential of multimodal semiotics, but there has been “little critical work done on the way that discourses are communicated, naturalized, and legitimized beyond the linguistic level” (Machin, 2013, p. 347). Thus, this study has addressed how multimodality is relevant to a critical perspective, and underscores that often, the most important message in a text, print or multimedia, is not stated explicitly (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004), but requires reading across multiple modes in order to read between the lines and identify its presence. However, it is these between-the-lines messages that can have the most powerful influence on readers, as they are often presented as natural, commonsensical, or already agreed upon and taken for granted.

The effort to help my students reconsider the ideological and communicative potential of multiple semiotic resources, in relation to the media texts they view and also in terms of the texts they compose, has yielded fruitful results. On the one hand, the students were able to identify the power relations

between characters as well as how particular characters are marginalized in the media texts they viewed by paying attention to the multiple modes that make up the text's representation. Thus, what the students have revealed is that multimodality can serve as a subversive act that facilitates critical media literacy, bringing to light "what is not said" but is nevertheless effectively expressed. On the other hand, they were able to articulate "what is not said" through the orchestration of various modes rather than relying on the linguistic mode, making their message as persuasive and effective as those in the media texts viewed. The students' design of their multimodal reports demonstrated the "*realization of their interest in their world*" (Kress, 2010, p. 6, emphasis in the original).

APPENDIX A. Rationale of Movies Selected and Discussion Questions

Romeo Must Die

This movie allows the focus on race and gender as a result of the protagonists, an Asian male and an African-American female.

- How are Asians portrayed in this movie?
- How are African Americans portrayed in this movie?
- What does it mean to be feminine as portrayed in this movie?
- What does it mean to be masculine as portrayed in this movie?
- How has what you noticed above been reflected through visual, spatial, aural, gestural, and linguistic modes?

Maid in Manhattan

This movie provides the simultaneous focus on race, class, and gender as a result of the Latina and white protagonists.

- In what ways are the relationship between a white senatorial candidate and a Latina maid unrealistic and realistic?
- What does the film say about the intersection between class, race, and gender, as well as social mobility?
- How has what you noticed above been reflected through visual, spatial, aural, gestural, and linguistic modes?

The Help

This movie provides the simultaneous focus on race, class, and gender as it centers on African-American maids and the white families they serve.

1. How does the movie portray the following:
 - black men
 - black women
 - white women (such as Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan and Celia Foote)
 - white women (such as Hilly Holbrook)
 2. And what does this imply about racism?
 3. This movie has many positive aspects. But in relation to the focus on race, class, gender, and their intersection, what are some negative aspects of this movie?
 4. How has what you noticed above been reflected through visual, spatial, aural, gestural, and linguistic modes?
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APPENDIX B. Reflection Paper Prompts

1. In addition to words and plot, how else is power relations related to race, class, gender, and sexuality in movies? In your discussion, if you use examples from movies NOT watched in class, then be sure to give their correct titles!
2. After working on the multimodal report, what is your understanding of EACH of the FIVE multiple modes of communication?
3. And more importantly, in what ways do they relate to one another? Please discuss this in general.
4. Specifically in relation to your report, in what ways did you make use of the five multiple modes in relation to one another to construct your report?
5. Just as importantly, how do you feel the experience of a multimodal report to be different from writing a traditional report, such as this one?

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